

Civic Engagement

November, 2006
Volume 2, Issue 2



Utah State Office of Education
Life Skills, Academic Service Learning



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An eye for an eye
makes the whole
world blind.

—Mahatma Gandhi

Civic Health

I don't like doctors. I generally go to the doctor when I already know there is something wrong. I have been fortunate to be able to enjoy good health most of my life. I attribute this to good sleeping, eating, and exercise habits. My wife is an excellent cook and is careful to make sure that we have nutritional food to eat and appropriate herbs and medicines to keep our family healthy. The idea is that we do things to proactively maintain a lifestyle that supports good health habits.

<http://www.ncoc.net/conferences/2006civichealth.pdf>

In September, the National Conference on Citizenship released a report entitled "America's Civic Health Index: Broken Engagement." The report identifies 9 categories and 40 indicators of civic health. The categories include: (1) connecting to civic and religious groups, (2) trusting other people, (3) connecting to others through family and friends, (4) giving and volunteering, (5) staying informed, (6) understanding civics and politics, (7) participating in politics, (8) trusting and feeling connected to major institutions, (8) expressing political views. The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement issued a follow-up report on youth participation in politics and communities. Just as doctors can identify measures that contribute to good physical health, these organizations strive to identify characteristics of good civic health.

Survey indicators point out that there is a general lack of trust among our young people.

So, just what is the condition of our civic health? There is cause for concern. These reports indicate that we are still "a nation of spectators." Fifty-eight percent of students are disengaged, meaning that they are basically non-participants in civic life. Survey indicators point out that there is a general lack of trust among our young people. They are suspicious of government, institutions, and organizations. There is significantly more civic participation from college graduates than there is from high school graduates. Confidence in the press is at an all-time low. On the positive side, there is a recent trend for young people to be more and more involved in giving and volunteering.

What would be the cause of this feeling of "broken engagement" from our youth? Why are they less committed to organizations, including the family? What have we done to engender this widespread feeling of distrust? The survey reported results, but did not really attempt to analyze them.

There is much room for speculation. It is worthwhile for each of us to examine the ways in which we involve youth in decision making and participation in our classrooms, schools and organizations. Sometimes, in the interest of efficiency we eliminate opportunities for students to voice their opinions. One of my favorite stories is of a United States History teacher instructing pupils about democracy by telling them of his own sequenced, step-by-step procedure that they had to follow to get credit for the unit.

Civic Health (cont.)

Interesting that we would use dictatorial techniques to teach about citizenship in the land of the free! How important it is that we support opportunities for student decision making and civic participation! Short-term efficiency cannot compare to long-term gains for society as students learn civic involvement through oftentimes “messy” democratic processes.

So what opportunities are there in your school/classroom for student civic involvement?
-Alan Griffin

19 INDICATORS OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

CIVIC INDICATORS

1. Community problem solving:

Working together informally with someone or some group to solve a community problem

2. Regular volunteering for a non-electoral organization:

Working in some way to help others for no pay

3. Active membership in a group or association:

Belonging to and actively participating in groups or associations, either locally or nationally

4. Participation in fundraising run/walk/ride:

Personally walking, running, or bicycling for a charitable cause

5. Other fundraising for charity:

Helping raise money for a charitable cause

ELECTORAL INDICATORS

6. Regular voting:

Voting regularly in both local and national elections

7. Persuading others:

Talking to others when there is an election taking place to try to show them why they should vote for or against one of the parties or candidates

8. Displaying buttons, signs, stickers:

For a candidate, political party, or political organization

9. Campaign contributions:

Contributing money to a candidate, a political party, or any organization that supported candidates

10. Volunteering for candidates or political organizations



INDICATORS OF POLITICAL VOICE

11. Contacting officials:

Contacting or visiting a public official, at any level of government, to ask for assistance or to express an opinion

12. Contacting the print media:

Contacting a newspaper or magazine to express an opinion on an issue

13. Contacting the broadcast media:

Calling in to a radio or television talk show to express an opinion on a political issue, even if it is not aired

14. Protesting:

Taking part in a protest, march, or demonstration

15. E-mail petitions:

Signing an e-mail petition

16. Written petitions:

Signing a written petition about a political or social issue

17. Boycotting:

Not buying something because of conditions under which the product is made, or because of disapproval of the company that produces it

18. Boycotting:

Buying a certain product or service because of approval of the social or political values of the company that produces or provides it

19. Canvassing:

Having done some work as a canvasser going door-to-door for a political or social group or candidate

www.civicyouth.org



November 14-15, 2006

Utah's Mock Election

Many students throughout the state participated in the national mock election on November 2nd. The balloting for the various candidates was as follows:

Senate

16.89%	Pete Ashdown (D)
57.14%	Orrin Hatch (R)
6.78%	Dave Seely (L)
5.84%	Scott Bradley (C)
9.28%	Julian Hatch (G)
4.07%	Roger Price (PC)

House of Representatives District 1

21.89%	Steven Olsen (D)
53.36%	Rob Bishop (R)
12.81%	Lynn Badler (L)
11.94%	Mark Hudson (C)

District 2

36.97%	Jim Matheson (D)
42.18%	LaVar Christensen (R)
7.58%	Austin Lett (L)
4.27%	W. David Perry (C)
9.00%	Bob Brister (G)

District 3

22.94%	Christian Burrige (D)
58.24%	Chris Cannon (R)
10.59%	Phillip Hallman (L)
8.24%	Jim Noorlander (C)

In addition to the voting on the candidates, 5 issues were listed for students to express their opinions about. Utah's results were combined with those from other states to generate the statistics in the next column:



1. Of the issues below, check the box next to the one you feel is the most important issue facing our nation today:

53.44%	The war in Iraq
17.76%	Immigration reform
15.87%	Energy and the environment
9.85%	America's economy
3.08%	Other

2. Which statement do you agree with the most?

30.01%	The war in Iraq was a mistake, and America should bring home its troops immediately.
30.74%	We have removed Saddam Hussein, a dangerous dictator, and we should not withdraw from Iraq until peace-loving Iraqis are able to defend themselves from terrorists and go forward with their democracy.
16.16%	We have no business forcing democracy on Iraq or any other country.
8.84%	If we show the terrorists enough love and forgiveness, eventually they will surrender their weapons and become law-abiding citizens.
14.25%	I don't know.

3. Which statement do you agree with the most?

11.73%	Immigration reform is not really needed.
16.89%	It would be a good way to get rid of all the illegal aliens who have come to our country uninvited.
28.12%	Build strong border fences and station police and the military along our 2,000-mile border with Mexico since that is where most aliens cross.
30.35%	To protect ourselves from terrorist' crossing into the U.S., we should maintain control of our borders and those who enter, but Mexico is our neighbor and friend and hopefully immigration reform will allow Mexican citizens who are needed as workers or have relatives here to enter our country legally.
12.90%	I don't know.

4. Which statement do you agree with the most?

11.22%	Global warming may be a problem someday, but we should let the people of the future deal with it when it comes.
17.08%	Global warming is hogwash, just something politicians like to argue about.
33.41%	Global warming is such a great threat to the entire world that we should stop burning petroleum or coal in any form and convert all engines—in automobiles, trains, planes, ships and factories—to operate on solar energy or burn clean fuels such as hydrogen.
25.78%	Global warming is a threat and the United States and China, in particular, should do all in their power to cooperate in reducing emissions and clean up the environment.
12.51%	I don't know.

5. Which statement do you agree with the most?

11.48%	America's economy is in such great shape that the rest of the world should follow our example and do as we do.
27.62%	America's economy is challenged as never before by a number of forces including globalization—competition from other nations—and because our economy is the strongest, we should just ignore other nations and peoples and let them take care of themselves.
31.92%	We must take the time to watch our elected leaders to see if they spend wisely without burdening us and future generations with debt, and then, for those who meet that test, we can decide if they deserve our vote on Election Day.
14.10%	We should demand even more tax cuts from our leaders and vote for those who cut taxes the most.
14.89%	I don't know.

Utah's Challenge to Do the Write Thing!

The Utah Board of Juvenile Justice (UBJJ) sponsoring Utah's **Do the Write Thing** Challenge.

Purpose of Do the Write Thing

The Challenge gives students an opportunity to examine their lives in classroom discussion and in written form to communicate what they can do to change the culture of violence.

Through the Challenge, students write about the causes of youth violence and its devastating impact on their lives. By encouraging them to accept the Challenge to effect a change, the program ultimately seeks to give them the opportunity to break the cycle of violence.

In the Classroom

Teachers are encouraged to incorporate the Challenge into their regular classroom curriculum. Some ideas for classroom activities include:

ENGLISH: May be part of an essay or poetry writing assignment.

HEALTH: Focus on youth violence as part of a discussion about personal safety.

CIVICS: May be part of an exercise on personal and civic responsibility.

HISTORY: May be used to examine youth violence from an historical perspective.

How the Challenge Works

All seventh and eighth grade students are invited to participate in the Challenge.

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION: *October through January.* Teachers are encouraged to make the Challenge a part of regular classroom instruction.

WRITING ASSIGNMENT AND ENTRY SUBMISSION: **Entry deadline is January 22, 2007!** Students complete an essay or poem and schools select the top writings for the competition.

JUDGING AND SELECTION OF WINNERS: Members of UBJJ and college students from throughout Utah will conduct initial reviews. A panel of VIP judges will select national and State Finalists.

STATE AWARDS LUNCHEON: *April.* Contest finalists, their teachers and a parent will be invited to attend an awards luncheon where state winners will be announced.

NATIONAL RECOGNITION WEEK: *July, in Washington, D.C.* The winning students, their teacher and a parent will be sent to participate with winners from across the country in the National Recognition Week.

For More Information

Go to www.juvenile.utah.gov for additional information and entry forms. If you have questions, contact Reg Garff, Juvenile Justice Specialist at (801) 538-1372 or e-mail: rgarff@utah.gov.

2007 Utah State Schools of Character

The Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Center for Community of Caring at the University of Utah and Character Education Partnership (CEP) are pleased to announce the 2007 Utah State Schools of Character (SSOC) competition. This is the first year of the Utah SSOC awards, which also serves as a preliminary step to advancing to the Character Education Partnership's (CEP) National awards program, the NSOC awards. **ALL Utah schools and districts are invited to participate in the Utah State Schools of Character program. (You need not be a Community of Caring School or District to participate.)** The Utah State Schools of Character program is endorsed by the [Utah State Office of Education](http://www.utah.gov/education).

Application Deadline: January 5, 2007 (postmarked)

The SSOC and NSOC applications are the same. However, if your school or district is located in Utah, you must apply directly to the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Center for Community of Caring, rather than to CEP.

Every year, CEP names 10 public and private schools and districts (K-12) as National Schools of Character (NSOC) for their outstanding work in character education. One or two Utah State Schools of Character award winners may advance to the National Schools of Character award competition. **In 2007, winning NSOC schools and districts will receive a \$20,000 award. Participants, honorable mentions, and the Utah State Schools of Character award winner(s) will be honored at a celebration in their honor in May 2007.**

Applications may be obtained from the site at <http://www.character.org/atf/cf/{77B36AC3-5057-4795-8A8F-9B2FCB86F3EB}/SSOCaward%20UT.pdf>.

For more information about the Utah State Schools of Character award program, visit <http://www.communityofcaring.org> or contact [Penny Keith](mailto:Penny.Keith@communityofcaring.org) at the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Center for Community of Caring at (801) 587-8990.



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Character & Civics Education

Events Calendar:

http://www.schools.utah.gov/onlinewe/calendar.pl?Op=ShowIt&CalendarName=Character_and_Civics_Education

E-mail Lists:

Civics: civics@uen.org
Subscribe at
<http://lists.uen.org/mailman/listinfo/civics/>

Character Education:
chared@uen.org
Subscribe at
<http://lists.uen.org/mailman/listinfo/chared/>

Service Learning: sl@uen.org
Subscribe at
<http://lists.uen.org/mailman/listinfo/sl/>

Life Skills Outcome Statements

The recent revision of the State Board of Education's "Life Skills" document identifies seven domains that are designed to help students become "productively engaged citizens endowed with the knowledge, skills, dispositions and confidence to participate fully in democratic life." Here are some brief statements of outcomes that describe what students should know, do, and become as they master life skills competencies.

Thinking and Reasoning

A student gathers and analyzes pertinent research and demonstrates logic in making an informed decision.

Social and Civic Responsibility

A student actively participates in classroom, school, and community activities that exhibit his/her sense of civic engagement.

Character

A student demonstrates character and concern for the common good through academic service learning.

Aesthetics

A student participates in an activity showing appreciation for the intricate subtleties in the world around him/her.

Communication

A student can communicate clearly and effectively in a variety of ways.

Systems Thinking

A student understands, works within, and improves a system.

Employability

A student establishes and maintains an educational plan that will maximize his/her career options.

Great Sites:

Utah State Courts Website: <http://www.utcourts.gov>
Request a speaker: <http://www.utcourts.gov/general/edresources/>

Civic Engagement Quiz from CIRCLE:
http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/Final_Civic_Inds_Quiz_2006.pdf

National Mock Election: <http://www.nationalmockelection.org/>

Positive Youth Development:
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/content/positiveyouth/factsheet.htm>

Learning to Give: <http://www.learningtogive.org/>

USOE Websites:

Character Ed – http://www.usoe.k12.ut.us/curr/char_ed/default.htm

Civics – <http://www.usoe.k12.ut.us/curr/civics/index.htm>

Service Learning – <http://www.usoe.k12.ut.us/curr/servicelearning/index.htm>

Life Skills – <http://www.usoe.k12.ut.us/curr/civics/lifeskills/index.htm>